

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01 IO-13

MC-02 ACDA-07 /118 W

----- 122522

R 132236Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1382

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SUVA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WELLINGTON 1812

FOR EA/ANP (PLEASE PASS TO AMBASSADOR SELDEN)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, EAID, AS, TN, UR, MILI

SUBJ: SOVIET INTEREST IN TONGA

LR

REF: (A) WELLINGTON 1764, (B) CINCPAC (DTG 111903Z MAY 76

1. SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
QUOTES KING OF TONGA AS SAYING SOVIET AMBASSADOR
SELYANINOV REQUESTED (A) THAT USE OF QUIET ANCHORAGE
IN TONGAN WATERS FOR SOVIET FACTORY SHIP BE GRANTED;
THAT PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH A TANK FARM TO REFUEL
SOVIET FISHING FLEET BE AGREED TO; AND THAT ESTABLISHMENT
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BE PERMITTED OF A FACILITY WHERE SICK OR INJURED SAILORS

MIGHT BE TREATED AND WHERE REST AND RECREATION FOR SHIP'S CREWS MIGHT BE FOUND. IN RETURN SOVIETS WOULD PROVIDE TONGA CHEAPER FISH THAN COULD BE PROCURED ELSEWHERE AND CONSTRUCT AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS AIRPORT WHERE LARGEST JETS COULD LAND. KING OF TONGA DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS NON-COMMITTAL VIS-A-VIS SOVIET OFFER AND PROMISED NOT TO MAKE ANY MOVE IN THIS CONTEXT WITHOUT FIRST INFORMING NEW ZEALAND. MFA IS CONCERNED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF SOVIET MOVE BUT IS STUDIOUSLY TRYING TO AVOID ANY SUGGESTION THAT IT IS UPSET, IN ORDER NOT TO WET KING OF TONGA'S APPETITE FOR NEW ZEALAND ASSISTANCE. END OF SUMMARY.

2. DURING MAY 12 CALL AT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CHARGE ASKED ACTING SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MERWYN NORRISH, IF HE COULD THROW ANY LIGHT ON RECENT REPORTS THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO NEW ZEALAND SELYANINOV (ALSO NOW ACCREDITED TO TONGA) HAD MADE OFFERS TO KING OF TONGA IN RETURN FOR CERTAIN PRIVILEGES THAT TONGA WOULD GRANT TO USSR. NORRISH THEN READ EXCERPTS FROM A CABLE RECEIVED IN LAST FEW DAYS FROM NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER TO WESTERN SAMOA, PAUL COTTON, WHO HAD COME TO NUKU ALOFA ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT OF NEW ZEALAND FOR PURPOSE OF CHECKING ON REPORTED SOVIET AID OFFERS. COTTON, WHO MET WITH KING OF TONGA ON MAY 8, HAD PRETENDED TO BE IN TONGA ON OTHER BUSINESS THAN SOVIET OFFERS. ALTHOUGH KING MAY HAVE SUSPECTED REAL PURPOSE OF COTTON'S VISIT HE WAS POLITE ENOUGH TO AVOID ANY INTIMATION TO THIS EFFECT. IN ANY CASE, CONVERSATION CENTERED ON SELYANINOV'S PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS TO THE KING ON APRIL 14.

3. KING RELATED THAT AFTER HANDING OVER CREDENTIALS SELYANINOV HAD READ AT GREAT LENGTH FROM A DOCUMENT WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN PREPARED IN MOSCOW. LATER SELYANINOV TOLD KING HE HAD BEEN THINKING OUT LOUD BUT KING FOUND THIS PATENTLY UNTRUE. AMONG THINGS SELYANINOV "THOUGHT" ABOUT WAS A SAFE ANCHORAGE "IN TONGAN WATERS" WHERE A SOVIET FACTORY SHIP COULD MAKE ITS HOME. SOVIET FISHING TRAWLERS WOULD BRING THEIR CATCH TO THE MOTHER SHIP AND GO BACK FOR FURTHER CATCHES. THE SOVIET UNION WOULD

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ALSO LIKE TO ESTABLISH A TANK FARM NEAR THE ANCHORAGE FOR REFUELING OF SOVIET SHIPS. A PLACE WHERE INJURED OR ILL SAILORS COULD BE TREATED AND WHERE THEY COULD HAVE REST AND RECREATION FACILITIES WOULD ALSO BE DESIRABLE. IN RETURN, SELYANINOV SAID, TONGA WOULD BE SUPPLIED WITH FISH AT A LOWER PRICE THAN IT CURRENTLY HAS TO PAY. FURTHER, AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS AIRPORT WHICH COULD RECEIVE THE LARGEST JET COMMERCIAL PLANES

WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED. SOVIET PLANES WOULD THEN HAVE A SPOT WHERE THEY COULD STOP OVER TO AND FROM ANTARTICA.

4. COTTON SAID KING OF TONGA HAD DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS NON-COMMITTAL ON SELYANINOV'S OFFERS. HE ASSURED COTTON THAT TONGA WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY SOVIET OFFER WITHOUT FIRST INFORMING NEW ZEALAND, KING NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT NUKU ALOFA AIRPORT WAS IN FACT UNSATISFACTORY AND THAT NEW ZEALAND APPEARED TO HAVE TURNED DOWN TONGAN REQUEST FOR NIGHT LIGHTING CAPABILITY. NORRISH REMARKED IN AN ASIDE THAT TONGAN REQUEST FOR LIGHTING WAS BEING RECONSIDERED IN WELLINGTON AND LIGHTING WOULD BE INSTALLED AFTER ALL, IN PART BECAUSE OF SELYANINOV'S OFFERS.

5. NORRISH SAID THAT NEW ZEALAND DID NOT WISH TO OVERPLAY SOVIET AID OFFERS OR TO APPEAR OVERLY CONCERNED WITH THE IMPLICATIONS. OTHERWISE APPETITE OF KING FOR NEW ZEALAND ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE WHETTED JUST WHEN NEW ZEALAND WAS IN ECONOMIC RECESSION AND WHEN BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION WAS VERY GRAVE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 WELLINGTON 1812

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6. NORRISH SAID SOVIET OFFERS COULD NOT HAVE COME AT A MORE AWKWARD TIME FOR NEW ZEALAND. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT HAD MADE ELECTORAL PROMISE TO SEVERELY CURB IMMIGRATION ON BASIS TOO MANY IMMIGRANTS WERE OVER TAXING HOUSING SUPPLY AND INFLATING THE COST OF HOUSES. AT PRESENT TIME AT LEAST 3,000 ILLEGAL TONGAN RESIDENTS ARE IN NEW ZEALAND IN SPITE OF FACT THAT IN 1974 THOUSANDS OF THEN-ILLEGAL TONGAN RESIDENTS HAD BEEN AMNESTIED AND THEIR STATUS IN NEW ZEALAND REGULARIZED. UNDER LATEST NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS TONGANS CAN COME FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD OF TIME ONLY AND INTO A CONCRETE JOB SITUATION ONLY. THE TROUBLE IS THAT JOB MARKET IS VERY TIGHT
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IN NEW ZEALAND AT THIS TIME AND ALMOST NO TONGANS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COME HERE SINCE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TOOK POWER IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR. MOREOVER, MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION AIR COMMODORE GILL IS THREATENING TO DEPORT 3,000 ILLEGAL TONGANS ALREADY IN THIS COUNTRY. THIS MEANS THAT REMITTANCES TO TONGA FROM NEW ZEALAND ARE AT A LOW EBB JUST WHEN TONGAN ECONOMY IS IN BAD SHAPE.

7 NORRISH NOTED THAT NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS WITH PACIFIC ISLAND NATIONS OF WESTERN SAMOA, FIJI, TONGA, COOK ISLANDS AND NIUE, HAD HERETOFORE BEEN ON A BASIS OF BENEVOLENT PATERNALISM. A NEW SITUATION, HOWEVER, APPEARED TO HAVE ARRIVED WITH SOVIET AND CHINESE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES AND RIVALRY SPREADING TO ISLAND NATIONS. NEW ZEALAND HAD TO BEGIN SEEING ITS ASSISTANCE TO THOSE NATIONS MORE IN TERMS OF AN OVERALL DEFENSE POSTURE THAN IN TERMS OF PATERNALISM. OFFERS OF HELP FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA WOULD MEAN THAT NEW ZEALAND AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES MIGHT HAVE TO PROVIDE MORE ASSISTANCE THAN THEY HAD IN THE PAST.

8. NORRISH SAID GNZ IS UNCERTAIN JUST WHAT SOVIET UNION IS UP TO. OFFER TO BUILD AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT NUKU ALOFA WAS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING BIG AND WOULD COST MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO COMPLETE. IT MIGHT BE THAT MAIN SOVIET INTEREST WAS IN THE FISH HARVEST

THAT COULD BE CAUGHT FROM WATERS AROUND TONGA. HE NOTED THAT AT SOME UNSPECIFIED RECENT DATE SOVIETS HAD SOUGHT PERMISSION FROM NEW ZEALAND FOR AEROFLOT TO FLY SOVIET FISHING CREWS TO AND FROM NEW ZEALAND. NEW ZEALAND HAD DECLINED TO APPROVE SOVIET REQUEST MAINLY BECAUSE GNZ DID NOT WANT TO ENCOURAGE SOVIET FISHING OR OTHER MARITIME ACTIVITY IN AND AROUND THIS COUNTRY.

9. COMMENT: OFFICIAL NEW ZEALAND CABLE FROM HIGH COMMISSIONER COTTON, WHO DIRECTLY QUOTED THE KING OF TONGA, DEFINITELY FLESHES OUT AND CORROBORATES REPORTS THAT SOVIETS HAVE MADE A VERY SUBSTANTIAL AID OFFER TO TONGA, MOREOVER, SELYANINOV'S ASSERTION THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVIET PLANES WOULD USE PROPOSED NEW ZIRPORT AT NUKU ALOFA AS STOPOVER SPOT FOR SOVIET FLIGHT TO ANTARTICA SEEMS IMPROBABLE. RATHER THE AIRPORT SEEMS MORE LIKELY TO BE THE REAL QUID FOR THE PRO OF A SHIP ANCHORAGE WITH CERTAIN FACILITIES WHICH, OF COURSE, MIGHT IN FUTURE BE USED AS A REFUELING STATION FOR SOVIET SHIPS OTHER THAN ITS FISHING FLEET.
KILLGORE

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